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ABSTRACT

This study describes the personality attributes of intellectually gifted female secondary teacher candidates compared to an unselected sample of female secondary candidates to determine what, if any, unique personal characteristics differentiate the two groups and to suggest certain attributes that might be acquired by their students through the process of identification. Gifted candidates' positive attitudes towards teaching indicate they will probably have harmonious interpersonal relationships with their students, which should enhance the possibility of student identification and may help improve society's attitude towards intellectual excellence. Gifted teacher candidates are not utilitarian in their values and express a strong desire to know and understand the meaning of life. An important finding is the dichotomy between scientific and artistic interests of the gifted candidates who are decidely scientific in their interests with a lack of artistic affairs. These findings suggest students might identify more closely with the gifted teachers rather than with the unselected group. (Author/JA)

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Personal Attributes of Intellectually Gifted Teacher Candidates and their Implications for Student Identification

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The strength and vitality of our society depends upon shared respect for many kinds of excellence that characterize human behavior. To achieve a better society our public schools have been given the task of helping each student develop his or her talent in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor areas of human development. But recent studies suggest that our schools and the adolescent peer culture have not fostered a deep commitment to intellectual excellence and academic achievement gained through hard work. Tannenbaum (14) asked eleventh grade students to rate hypothetical students on a combination of factors: intellectual brilliance, studiousness, and athleticism. Ranked last was the brilliant, studious, nonathletic youngster while top ranking was given to the brilliant, nonstudious athletic youngster. Students who were athletic were ranked higher in all cases than students who were non athletic. Coleman (3) found that only 31% of the high school boys in his study wanted to be remembered as brilliant students, but 45 percent wished to be remembered as star athletics. These studies indicate there is a lack of

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status given to the high school student who is highly motivated and must work hard to achieve in the academic area. Academic success brings little glory to the contemporary high school student, particularly if it must be gained by hard and dogged work.

Perhaps this tendency will be reversed when a larger portion of society gives greater value to academic achievement and more teachers are perceived by more students as models of intelligence and achievement whose behavior is worthy of imitation.

Gewertz and Stenger contend generalized imitation begins to merge into identification when it shades into imitation of values and when responses are fitted into a generalized class. Imitation usually includes gestures, manerisms, and methods of obtaining goals, while identification is the adoption of another persons abstract code of behavior and general life stance. (7) McCandless (12) points out that expertness and prestige in contrast to physical power influence modeling more among older than younger children and that expertness at one's job is likely to be the most important source of a parent's power, particularly when society esteems the job. The prestige of teachers has increased since

1947 to 1963 as shown by the upward change of ranks from 34 to 27.5 for instructors in public schools and a change from 36 to 29.5 for public school teachers (for some reason these two categories of teachers were considered different (9). The increased prestige given to teachers and their role in society offers some encouragement for their greater influence on student attitudes and values.

If our future society encourages a greater degree of identification between teacher and students, what are some of the personal attributes students may adopt from intellectually gifted teachers? Will gifted teachers attitudes toward students be conducive to the process of identification? If identification takes place, what can students learn from teachers in terms of attitudes, interests, and values? To answer these questions, a group of sophomore female secondary teacher candidates, participating in the Miami University Honors Program, were compared to an unselected group of female secondary candidates on a number of personal attributes which included attitudes toward teaching, values, vocational preferences, and personal preferences. Honors students are intellectually gifted and are academic achievers because they ranked in the upper ten percent

of their high school class, performed at the 90th percentile or better on the American College Test and maintained a 3.25 grade point average as a university student.

Personal attributes were measured as follows: attitude toward teaching by the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory; values by the Alport-Vernon-Lindsey Study of Values; vocational interests by the Kuder Preference Record, Vocational; and personal preference by the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule. Comparisons between the two groups were made by using the "t" test and .05 and .01 as levels of confidence for determining significant differences.

Review of the Literature

Warren and Heist (16) compared intellectually gifted college students with unselected college students on various personality characteristics. In terms of values, as measured by the Study of Values, they found sharp divergence in the Theoretical, Economic, and Aesthetic scales. Gifted students valued the theoretical and aesthetic orientations relatively higher and the economic or utilitarian relatively lower than did students in the comparative sample. Differences on the other scales, Social, Political and Religious were slight.

Research, using the MTAI to predict teacher-pupil rapport, has been conducted by Callis (2) with satisfactory results. Using a sample of 77 teachers in grades 4-10 and ratings by pupils, principals, and observers, he found a significant relationship between MTAI scores and pupil-teacher rapport.

The manual for the Kuder reports data regarding the vocational preferences and interests of teachers. It is only when teacher groups are differentiated into male, female, elementary-secondary, and subject areas that notable differences are obtained. Based on the findings, the use of the Kuder in this study to determine vocational preferences of specific teacher groups is justified. (11).

The Edwards Personal Preference Schedule based on Murray's need system has been used in a number of studies to determine teacher personality characteristics. Sheldon, Coole, and Coople (13) found that potentially good teachers had significantly higher scores on Affiliation and Dominance and significantly lower scores on Agression, Succorance, and Abasement than did teachers who scored low on the MTAI. Hamacheck and Mori (8) analyzed the need structure of beginning teacher candidates at Michigan State and found female secondary candidates to be lower than the norm group on need for

Deference and Affiliation and higher in need for Heterosexuality.

Results and Discussion

Gifted teacher candidates show significantly higher scores on the Minnesota Teacher Attitudes Inventory than the unselected teacher candidates with the difference significant at the .001 level of confidence. From this data it can be concluded they will probably have harmonious interpersonal relationships with their students which will enhance the probability of identification. This finding suggests that gifted teachers may have greater influence on their students because of their exceptionally positive attitudes toward students when compared to the unselected candidates. This data is presented in Table 1.

Intellectually gifted teacher candidates do not place high value on the practical or what is useful compared to the unselected sample. They are not greatly concerned with the production, marketing, and consumption of goods - interests related to the business world. They do have significantly higher religious values than the unselected sample which indicates our gifted teachers are searching for the meaning of life and seek to comprehend the cosmos as a whole. This desire for unity, a characteristic of gifted students also found by

Terman (15) and Hollingsworth (10), suggest that their intellect permits them to be less bound to conventional concerns and to react to their environment with imagination and curosity. The lack of economic value by our gifted teachers candidates agrees with the Warren and Herst finding that gifted college students are less utilitarian than unselected college students. Table 2 presents the data on values.

Our gifted teacher candidates have significantly higher scientific interests but have significantly lower artistic interests compared to the unselected sample of teacher candidates. These findings mean the gifted candidates like to discover new facts and solve problems, and have interests in science similar to physicans, chemists, and engineers. The gifted candidates are significantly lower than the unselected sample in artistic interests. The unselected sample has higher interests in doing creative work with their hands that involves attractive design, color, and material. This data is found in Table 3.

Table 4 presents the means and standard deviations for the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule where no statistically significant differences were found.

Table 1

Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory

Gifted N=40		Unselected N=40		
Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	t
56.80	25.43	41.17	24.37	5.37**

** significant at the .001 level of confidence

Table 2

Values

		Gifted N=40		Unselected N=40		
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	t
1.	Theoretical	35.85	7.33	35.96	6.30	.07
2.	Economic	34.97	8.10	38.93	6.49	2.26*
3.	Aesthetic	44.65	6.54	44.10	9.20	.27
4.	Social	41.50	7.46	41.63	6.81	.07
5.	Political	38.90	6.58	40.13	8.25	.90
6.	Religious	44.77	9.80	38.90	7.77	2.79**

* significant at the .05 level

**significant at the .01 level

Table 3

Vocation Preference

	Gifted N=40		Unselected N=40		
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	t
Outdoor	37.89	14.76	31.66	11.57	1.93
Mechanical	21.00	7.94	22.30	7.09	.70
Computational	26.67	11.56	22.26	10.29	1.64
Scientific	35.27	11.05	26.73	9.89	3.33**
Persuasive	34.45	13.53	38.96	10.28	1.54
Artistic	30.54	9.50	34.90	8.12	2.02*
Literary	22.81	12.30	24.23	7.33	.58
Musical	15.86	6.66	16.16	6.52	.18
Social Service	50.97	14.65	48.43	14.69	.70
Clerical	47.89	14.57	47.53	13.59	.10

* significant at the .05 level of confidence

** significant at the .01 level of confidence

Table 4

Personal Preference

	Gifted N=40		Unselected N=40		
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	t
Achievement	52.02	10.46	50.63	10.77	.54
Deference	41.87	10.07	46.13	12.94	1.49
Order	45.15	8.61	46.33	9.88	.52
Exhibition	50.15	10.49	48.63	9.83	.62
Autonomy	52.65	12.39	49.50	10.18	1.16
Affiliation	49.25	11.63	48.83	9.79	.16
Intraception	48.07	12.76	50.03	10.22	.71
Succorance	51.32	12.81	50.43	11.49	.30
Dominance	51.52	10.98	50.80	11.72	.26
Abasement	48.80	8.90	51.13	7.44	1.19
Nuturance	51.95	10.64	51.56	10.05	.15
Change	50.02	9.09	50.93	9.24	.40
Endurance	50.35	9.26	48.20	9.55	.94
Heterosexuality	51.10	10.30	53.36	7.83	1.04
Aggression	45.95	10.56	40.60	9.00	1.55

Summary and Conclusions

This study described the personality attributes of intellectually gifted female secondary teacher candidates compared to an unselected sample of female secondary teacher candidates to determine what, if any, unique personal characteristics differentiate the two groups and to suggest certain attributes that might be acquired by their students through the process of identification. Gifted candidates positive attitudes toward teaching indicate they will probably have harmonious interpersonal relationships with their students, which should enhance the possibility of student identification, and may help improve society's attitude toward intellectual excellence. Gifted teacher candidates are not utilitarian in their values, and express a strong desire to know and understand the meaning of life. An important finding is the dichotomy between scientific and artistic interests of our gifted candidates who are decidely scientific in their interests with a lack of interest in artistic affairs. This dichotomy is especially discouraging when leading intellectuals are urging that science and technology be tempered with aesthetic concern.

These findings suggest students might identify more closely with the gifted teacher candidates rather than the unselected group based on their higher MTAI

scores. If these future teachers have greater influence on students behavior, than teachers have today, it is suggested students will not have high value for the practical or utilitarian but rather search for the meaning of life as their prime value. They will like to discover new facts and solve problems in a scientific manner but will not have strong interest associated with artistic endeavors.

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